

The fine lime stone valley of Shenandoah . . . the most beautiful, and most bountiful portion of our country.

John S. Skinner, founding editor, *American Farmer*, 1820

From Backcountry to Breadbasket to Battlefield and Beyond

Sweeping from east to west, the landscape seen above, from the porch of Belle Grove manor house, holds stories of the Shenandoah Valley reaching from present time deep into Earth’s history. These stories of geology, people, and place enrich this national historical park, set aside by Congress in 2002.

The valley’s geologic story includes an ancient ocean that laid down vast limestone beds, the basis of fertile soil. Geologic forces built mountains that shelter the valley. Erosion created ravines, rolling hills, and fast-flowing water. All these features created a “bread-basket” that made this valley a battleground in America’s Civil War.

Limestone (the rock behind these words) underlies most of the valley. It juts out of fields and along streams, and is used in a variety of ways, including for roads and buildings.



Early Times in the Valley

The first people arrived in the Shenandoah Valley around 10,000 years ago and lived well on wildlife and plants. Eventually they cultivated the land, growing a variety of crops. Tribal warfare over this bounty pushed out most American Indians before European settlers arrived. Jost Hite, one of the first new settlers, arrived in 1731 with 16 families from Pennsylvania. They found what they were looking for: fertile soil and abundant water.



American Indians began growing maize (above), squash, and beans in the valley more than one thousand years ago.

The Valley seems to be designed as the great thoroughfare between the west and southwest to the northern cities.

1838 petition to obtain state support for building the Valley Turnpike



The Burning was ordered by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to destroy the “Breadbasket of the Confederacy.” His plan

succeeded but it also burned horror and anger into the memories of generations to come.

Belle Grove and the Age of Grain

The new settlers found that wheat grew very well in the Shenandoah Valley and made high quality flour. By the late 1700s, they began growing wheat to sell commercially. It soon was in demand throughout the colonies and Europe. During this Age of Grain, a few plantations were established in the valley. Belle Grove (above) was

developed by Isaac Hite Jr. and his wife Nelly (sister of President James Madison).

The Hites used as many as 100 enslaved workers in their huge fields. Some small farmers used slaves too, a practice that divided valley residents. As in the rest of the nation, the conflict over slavery would ignite the Civil War.



Hundreds of mills sprung up along the miles of fast-flowing streams in the valley.

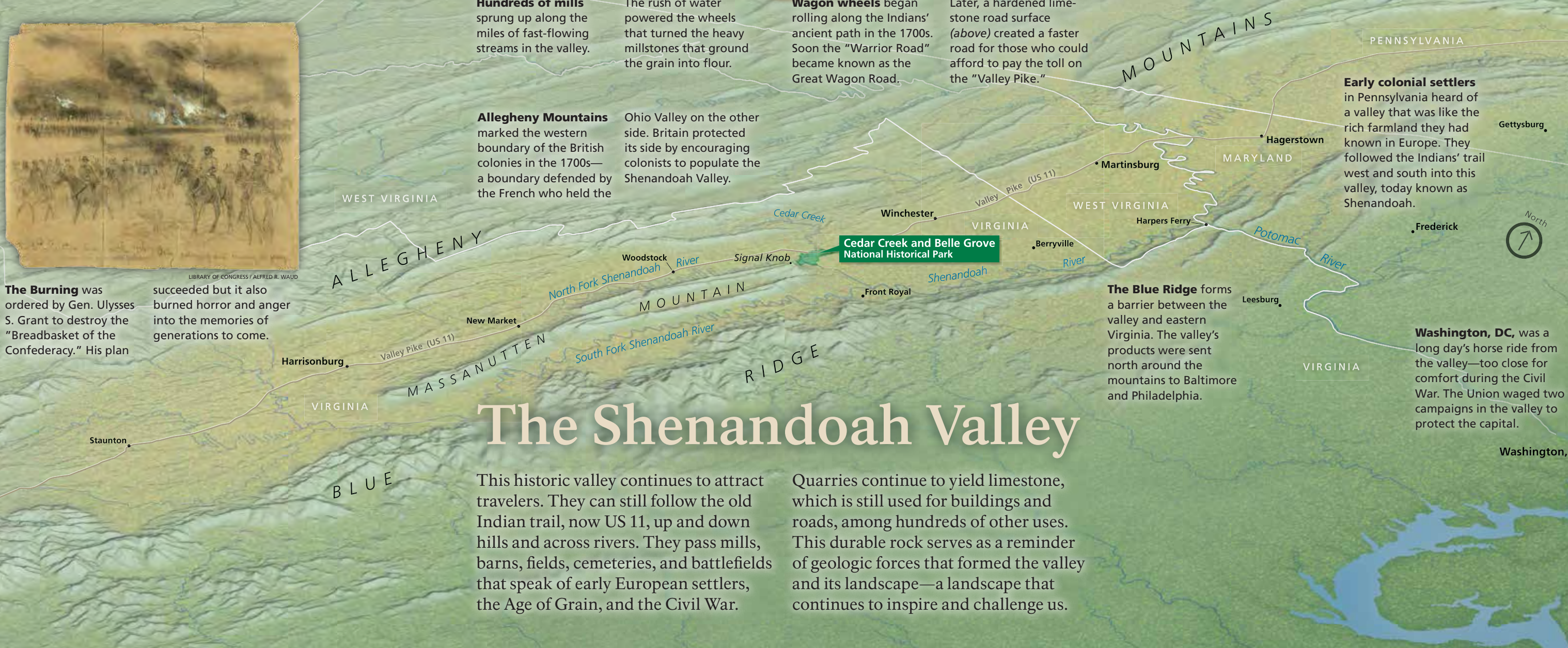
The rush of water powered the wheels that turned the heavy millstones that ground the grain into flour.

Wagon wheels began rolling along the Indians’ ancient path in the 1700s. Soon the “Warrior Road” became known as the Great Wagon Road.

Later, a hardened limestone road surface (above) created a faster road for those who could afford to pay the toll on the “Valley Pike.”

Allegheny Mountains marked the western boundary of the British colonies in the 1700s—a boundary defended by the French who held the

Ohio Valley on the other side. Britain protected its side by encouraging colonists to populate the Shenandoah Valley.



The Shenandoah Valley

This historic valley continues to attract travelers. They can still follow the old Indian trail, now US 11, up and down hills and across rivers. They pass mills, barns, fields, cemeteries, and battlefields that speak of early European settlers, the Age of Grain, and the Civil War.

Quarries continue to yield limestone, which is still used for buildings and roads, among hundreds of other uses. This durable rock serves as a reminder of geologic forces that formed the valley and its landscape—a landscape that continues to inspire and challenge us.

The Civil War Comes

The Union and Confederacy fought over the Shenandoah Valley throughout the war. But in 1864 the Union began a campaign to destroy the “Breadbasket of the Confederacy.” This plan, called “The Burning,” systematically burned farms the length of the valley, leaving residents with no food for themselves, let alone for soldiers of either side. But despite the immense destruction, the resilient valley and its residents recovered quickly after the war.



Signal Knob, shown in the top photograph, overlooks the park. From its summit, soldiers could spy on the enemy below. They sent messages using a signaling kit (above)—two flags, two torches fueled from a canteen, and a signal rocket.

Fields of wheat spread far and wide, interspersed with woodlands . . . quaint old mills, with turning wheels, were busily grinding the previous year’s harvest . . . Brig. Gen. Richard Taylor, CSA, 1862

Early colonial settlers in Pennsylvania heard of a valley that was like the rich farmland they had known in Europe. They followed the Indians’ trail west and south into this valley, today known as Shenandoah.

The Blue Ridge forms a barrier between the valley and eastern Virginia. The valley’s products were sent north around the mountains to Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Washington, DC, was a long day’s horse ride from the valley—too close for comfort during the Civil War. The Union waged two campaigns in the valley to protect the capital.

The Battle of Cedar Creek

OCTOBER 19, 1864 In the foggy dawn, Confederate soldiers crossed Cedar Creek and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River to surprise sleeping Union soldiers. Fighting raged as the Confederates chased the Union soldiers north. By late morning, Confederate Gen. Jubal Early thought he had won. But Union Gen. Philip Sheridan was racing south from Winchester, determined to rally his stunned troops. By sunset, in an epic reversal of fortune, Early was defeated. Over 8,600 Union and Confederate men were killed, wounded, or captured that day in one of the bloodiest battles in the Shenandoah Valley.



This wasn't the first time Sheridan had beaten Early's army, but it was the last. The Union's "Burning" campaign had destroyed the valley's irreplaceable food sources, making it impossible for the Confederacy to adequately feed their soldiers and for residents to feed themselves. The Union victory at Cedar Creek helped ensure Abraham Lincoln's reelection as President of the United States three weeks later. Within six months, the Civil War was over.

The Battle of Cedar Creek, by Julian Scott, portrays the Vermont brigade during the Union's afternoon counterattack.
VERMONT STATE CURATOR'S OFFICE

Plan Your Visit

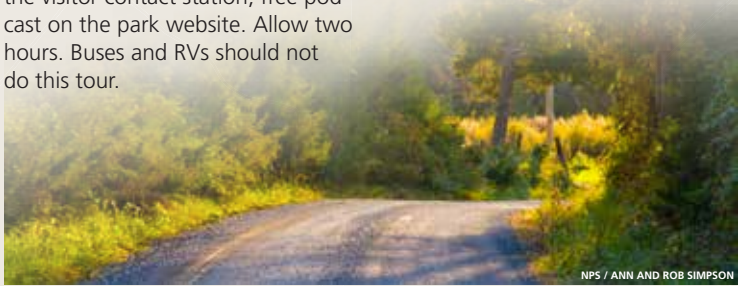
Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, established in 2002, is being developed. You can learn about the park at the visitor contact station and at events and ranger programs, on the self-guiding auto tour, and at sites operated by park partners. Visit often to enjoy our progress.

Getting to the Park The park is about 90 minutes west of downtown Washington, DC, and three hours north of Roanoke, VA.

From the south: Take I-81 exit 298, then go north on US 11. Belle Grove Plantation is on the left. The park visitor contact station is in Middletown.

From the north: Take I-81 exit 302 to US 11 south. The park visitor contact station is in Middletown. Belle Grove Plantation is past the town on the right.

Auto Tour Follow the battle on this self-guiding tour. Free guide at the visitor contact station; free podcast on the park website. Allow two hours. Buses and RVs should not do this tour.



Park Partners The National Park Service works with partners to manage the park and provide visitor programs. Of the 3,700 acres within park boundaries, approximately 2,200 acres are private and not open to the public. The partners preserve and manage the remaining 1,542 acres, including historic structures.

Belle Grove Inc. Offers guided tours of the Manor House April–December, and other programs throughout the year. 540-869-2028
www.bellegrove.org

Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation Operates foundation headquarters and Hupp's Hill Visitor Center, and conducts battle reenactments. 540-869-2064
www.ccbf.us



Reenactments Every October Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation holds reenactments of the battle. The National Park Service also conducts special programs during this weekend.



Accessibility We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Programs Enjoy programs, walks, and guided tours May through October. Some partners' programs have a fee.

Safety and Regulations Ask about road conditions before taking the auto tour. • Federal law prohibits removing natural or historic features. • Private property in the park is closed to the public. • Firearms regulations are on the park website.

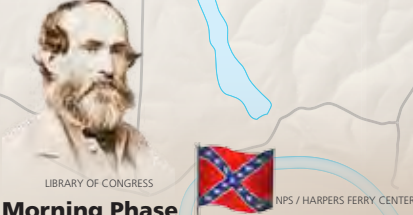
Emergencies call 911

Park Monuments In the decades after the Civil War, veterans returned to the valley to honor their lost comrades. The park's three veterans' monuments—to soldiers from Vermont and New York (*above*), and to Confederate Gen. Stephen Ramseur—were erected in this spirit.

More Information Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park 7712 Main St. (US 11) Middletown, VA 22645 540-869-3051
www.nps.gov/cebe

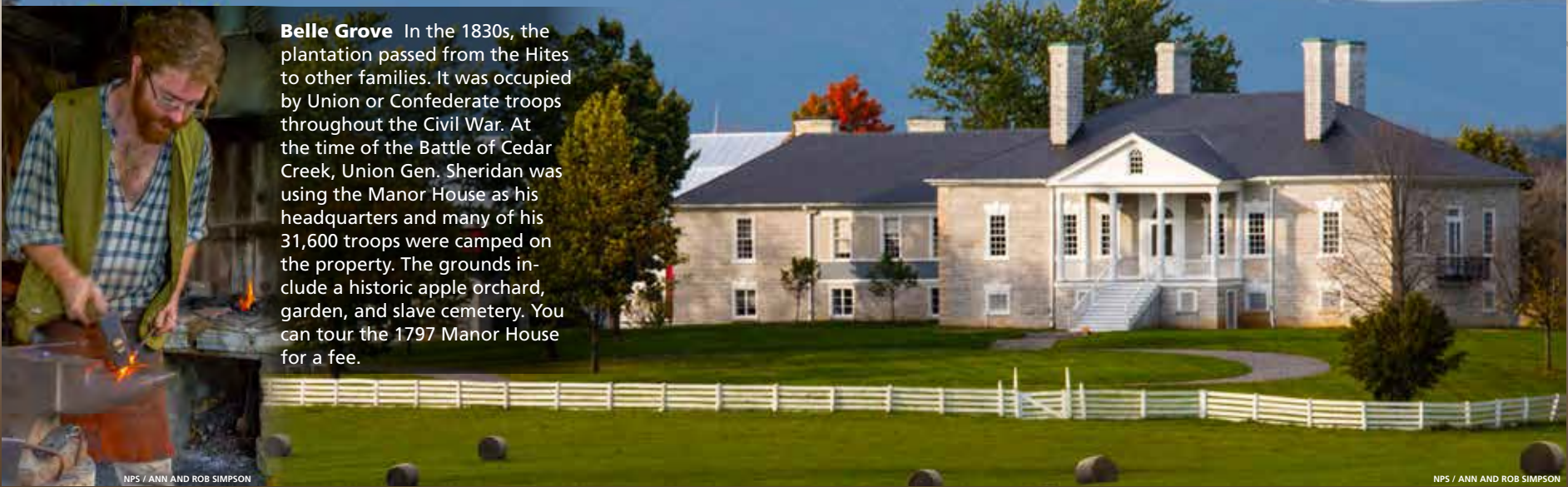
Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn about national parks at www.nps.gov.

©GPO:200x—xxx-xxxxxxx Reprint 20xx
Printed on recycled paper.



Morning Phase Confederate Gen. Jubal Early led his troops in a three-pronged dawn attack that pushed Union soldiers toward the Union headquarters at Belle Grove. By 7 am, Union leaders abandoned the post and retreated toward Mid-

dletown. After an hour-long fight at a cemetery overlooking the town, the Union soldiers retreated farther north. They eventually stopped to rest north of the town.



Belle Grove In the 1830s, the plantation passed from the Hites to other families. It was occupied by Union or Confederate troops throughout the Civil War. At the time of the Battle of Cedar Creek, Union Gen. Sheridan was using the Manor House as his headquarters and many of his 31,600 troops were camped on the property. The grounds include a historic apple orchard, garden, and slave cemetery. You can tour the 1797 Manor House for a fee.

NPS / RICK FOSTER

NPS / ANN AND ROB SIMPSON

NPS / ANN AND ROB SIMPSON